

May 14 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

agreed to ban juvenile possession of semi-automatic assault weapons and large-capacity magazines, weapons used—designed only for mayhem. There's no good reason for a child to own an AK-47 or a 15-round ammo clip.

I applaud the Senate for taking these two steps. However, on Wednesday a narrow majority squandered an important opportunity to close the gun show loophole through which tens of thousands of guns are sold each year without background checks. Yesterday I called on the Senate to reconsider that vote. It makes no sense to let criminals continue to use legitimate gun shows as a convenience store for their weapons.

Today the Senate will vote again on a measure purporting to address this issue. However, the new Senate Republican bill is still riddled with high-caliber loopholes. It won't stop criminals from buying guns at gun shows. At the same time, it will open up a new pawnshop loophole that lets convicted felons get guns at a local pawnshop. That's actually worse than current law.

I simply can't believe the Senate will make the same mistake twice. So once again, I ask

them to reject this phony proposal and to pass real legislation that requires the background checks necessary to prevent criminals from buying guns at gun shows which they cannot buy at gun stores. This should be a moment for national unity.

I was so pleased today to receive a letter from the major gun manufacturers reiterating their support for our efforts to pass real, enforceable, mandatory background checks at gun shows. They recognize that law-abiding citizens don't need a gun show loophole, only criminals do.

For 6 years, we have made strong, steady progress against crime by elevating results over ideology. Today we have a chance to put aside partisanship, political divisions, and draw special interest power that has dominated our politics on this issue for too long. For the sake of our children, I hope the Senate changes its mind and does the right thing.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 a.m. in the South Portico at the White House, prior to his departure for Seattle, WA.

Remarks in a Telephone Conversation With Americans at Camp Hope, Albania

May 14, 1999

Maj. Gen. William Hinton. Hello, Mr. President. This is General Bill Hinton from Camp Hope in Albania.

The President. Hi, General Hinton. And are you there with Mr. Sykes?

Major General Hinton. Yes, Mr. Chris Sykes is here with me from CARE.

The President. Well, first of all, I just wanted to call to applaud your efforts in building and managing Camp Hope. I think it's a very important example of our commitment to give shelter and assistance to the refugees until they can go home. And I'm very proud you were able to do it in such a short time. I know you had a lot of constraints finding the right site and getting the infrastructure up. I think this will help us to get our NATO Allies to do more on other camps as well.

How are you doing with the rest of the work there?

Major General Hinton. Sir, the work is coming along very well. We're progressing with the rest of the camp, and we hope to complete the camp for up to 20,000—

[At this point, the telephone connection was interrupted.]

Major General Hinton. —hello, Mr. President. Are you there?

The President. Yes.

Major General Hinton. In any case, we hope to complete the rest of the camp by the first of June.

The President. That's great. Well, it's good to talk to you again. I hope you will tell all the people in Joint Task Force Shining Hope that I'm very grateful for a job well done.

Major General Hinton. Mr. Sykes is here, sir, and of course, he already has 400 refugees on board.

Chris Sykes. How are you, Mr. President?

The President. I'm fine.

Mr. Sykes. Okay. It's been a great exercise—

The President. Well, I really appreciate the way you've worked with our military to organize and design the camp. And I want to thank CARE and all the NGO's that are working there.

Exactly how many are there now?

Mr. Sykes. We've got exactly 409 now, and we'll be receiving another 500, which we're in the process of receiving as you speak.

The President. Well, that's good news. I think it's good for them—go ahead.

Mr. Sykes. Yes—we're moving right ahead on schedule, and we should be able to speed up our rate of reception. The initial influx has come in from Kukes, and we're prepared for any influx from Macedonia, as well.

The President. Well, that's great. I think we may have a little influx from Macedonia. The situation there is not the best, and we've got a lot of pressure. So I hope we can really do a good job of getting as many people as possible there.

Mr. Sykes. Well, sir, we'll keep this camp going on schedule, and we're looking for sites for two more camps right now.

The President. That's great. I know they need all the help they can get. They've taken a lot of folks, and I know a lot of them are in homes, but I think from here on out we're going to have to have more camps and good ones.

Mr. Sykes. Yes, sir. We've got a good contractor here helping to build these camps, and we'll keep trying to find the right sites.

The President. Well, I appreciate it. I know it's tough work, but you're doing something really important. And it will be temporary, but it may be a while. And so we've got to do the best we can. And I'm very grateful to both of you.

Mr. Sykes. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you, Chris, and thank you, General. It's good to hear your voice. Take care.

Major General Hinton. Thank you, thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The teleconference began at 9:40 a.m. The President spoke from the Oval Office at the White House to Maj. Gen. William S. Hinton, Jr., USAF, Commander, Joint Task Force Shining Hope, and Chris Sykes, camp manager, CARE, at the Camp Hope refugee site, located 60 miles from the city of Fier, Albania.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in Seattle, Washington May 14, 1999

Thank you. I couldn't help but thinking when Jack was up here talking and saying all those wonderful things, that Joe Andrew had just said that we would win every election in 2000, from dogcatcher to President. And my immediate reaction was, that's not such a great distance. [Laughter] That's because I spend too much time in Washington. [Laughter] Now, when I'm in Seattle, it feels great.

Let me first of all say how grateful I am that the Governor and the mayor are here. Thank you both for coming; our State party chair; your former mayor and my good friend,

Norm Rice, and his fine wife. I thank our officers for coming out here to Washington. And Jack, to you and Ron, my long-time friend, and Ted and Ben and the others who are here who have helped so much, Mr. Marshall and others, I thank you all.

I was thinking when I got on the airplane today—you know, when a politician tells you a true story, your immediate reaction is, it couldn't be true—[laughter]—but this is a true story. The first time I ever came to Washington, when I was running for President in 1992, I came rather late. I'd been out there running